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ABSTRACT

The two feature articles of this issue were keynote addresses delivered at the November 21-22, 1975 conference which the Council on Interracial Books for Children cosponsored with the General Assistance Center of Teachers College, Columbia University. The opening day's keynote address raises a number of issues that have vital implications for parents, educators, and publishers: text books in the U.S. often assault children rather than educate them; the recent publicity given to the Shockleys and the Jensens is another assault on black children; and the political aspects of the social sciences and the politics involved serve to maintain certain aspects of our society's value system. The second day's keynote address discussed a survey by the Council on Interracial Books for Children of 100 books on Puerto Rican themes, noting that the prevailing trends found were those of cultural stereotyping and historical misrepresentation. The topic of the address was "Responging to Racism and Sexism: Children's Books as a Liberating Force." (Author/JM)

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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

BULLETIN

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Responding to Racism and Sexism:

New Values Challenge Old Assumptions
Children's Books as a Liberating Force

Racism in Long Island School on Trial

CIBC and Bulletin Staffs

Charles Bible
Susan Bodenstein
Jean Carey Bond
Bradford Chambers
Ruth Charnes
Jeanie Chin
Sonia Chin
Lynn Edwards
Lyla Hoffman
Bettina Lande
Gabrielle McMahon
Robert B. Moore
Antonia Pérez
Anita Stark
Virginia Sterling
Joyce Toney
Byron Williams

INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

BULLETIN

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1 1976

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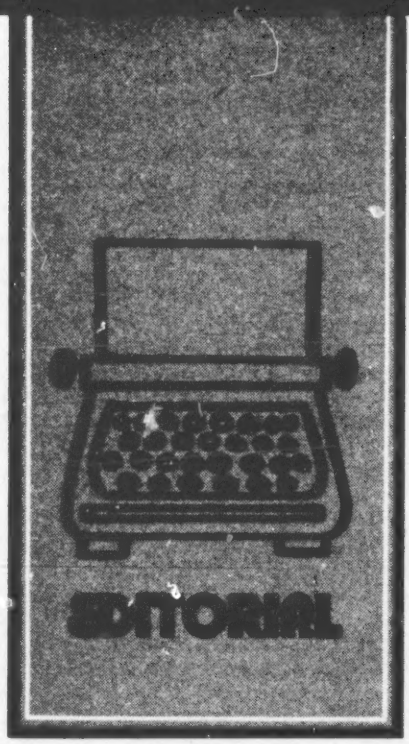
WHAT IS THE COUNCIL?

The Council on Interracial Books for Children, a non-profit organization founded in 1965, is dedicated to promoting anti-racist and anti-sexist literature and instructional materials for children in the following ways: 1) by publishing this *Bulletin*; 2) by running a yearly contest for unpublished minority writers of children's literature; 3) by conducting clinics and workshops on racism and sexism; 4) by providing consultants and resource specialists in awareness training to educational institutions, and 5) by establishing the Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, which publishes annual reference books, monographs, lesson plans and audio-visual materials designed to help teachers eliminate racism and sexism and to develop pluralism in education. Write to the CIBC for further information about these services.



A New Look

With this issue, we present a new look for the *Bulletin* of the Council on Interracial Books for Children. Change in our format was prompted by last year's questionnaire to subscribers. These elicited nearly unanimous agreement among readers that the former tabloid size was unwieldy, awkward to file and difficult to duplicate in photocopying machines. We hope the change will enhance the *Bulletin's* usefulness to you.

Answers to the questionnaire also revealed major support for broadening our analyses of children's books to focus on such anti-human values as ageism, elitism, materialism and individualism in addition to racism and sexism. Readers will note that recent "Bookshelf" reviews of new books have reflected this expanded focus. Readers also expressed a preference for coverage of other learning materials besides children's books; therefore, future issues of the *Bulletin* will regularly analyze basal readers, social studies and American history textbooks.

Readers were virtually unanimous in urging that we expand our coverage to the electronic media—primarily TV and movies. We are now exploring a "Media Watch" feature that would apply to TV programs and movies the criteria and perspectives we have developed for evaluating children's books. To assure the usefulness of a "Media Watch" department, we have communicated with several organizations already active in this area and will solicit volunteer reader participation in a national media watch campaign. Readers will be interested to know that for several months the Gray Panther Media Watch Committee has been using our offices as headquarters in their efforts to counteract offensive stereotypes of older people as portrayed in the media, and that the criteria they now use to identify ageist stereotypes are based on CIBC criteria to identify racist and sexist stereotypes. The group has already made a successful presentation before the National Association of Broadcasters, prompting revision of the television code to include age (along with race and sex) as an area requiring special sensitivity. The Gray Panthers have also launched consciousness-raising workshops for producers at CBS-TV.

Another result of our questionnaire is that in future issues of the *Bulletin* more attention will be given both to young adult materials and to materials for the very young. Up-coming features and lesson plans for high school teachers of literature will include analyses of such popular high school texts as *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. In addition we are creating a department on day care and early childhood education.

Finally, we share with readers concern about the inadequacy of our name, *Interracial Books for Children*, in reflecting the broadened range of our perspectives and concerns. Since intensive in-house efforts have still to yield a satisfactory replacement, we again call on our readers for HELP!. Please forward suggestions to us.

Special thanks to those of you who responded to our questionnaire and helped to bring about changes in the *Bulletin*—changes we think are very much for the better.

CIBC's Outreach

As part of CIBC's evaluation of children's books for racism and sexism, our newly established resource center is publishing the monograph of a CIBC in-depth study of the controversial *Little Black Sambo* (see announcement on inside back cover). We are pleased to advise librarians that *School Library Journal* will feature a chapter from the monograph in its February issue.

CIBC's increasing community outreach is also reflected in much of the contents of this issue of our *Bulletin*.

For example, the two feature articles by Dr. Alvin Poussaint and by Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón are keynote addresses delivered at the November 21-22 conference which CIBC co-sponsored with the General Assistance Center of Teachers College, Columbia University (see page 12).

We are proud to report that CIBC staff member Dr. Robert B. Moore recently appeared as an expert witness in a court case which could have far-reaching implications for anti-racism struggles everywhere in the U.S. He describes the case in "Racism in Long Island School on Trial" (page 10). A transcript of the trial has been requested by the CIBC and the Center for Constitutional Rights. Since trial transcripts are extremely costly, we are appealing for funds to help cover the costs. Please send contributions to the Jeanne Baum Legal Defense Fund, 166 Stuyvesant Drive, Seldon, N.Y. 11784.

We are also pleased to report that the CIBC has been asked to provide expert testimony on behalf of the authors of *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, who are currently seeking legal instatement of their textbook for use in the Mississippi school system. Part I of our report on this case appeared in the last *Bulletin*; the second and final part appears in this issue.

The role of book illustrations in perpetuating racist and sexist stereotypes has not received the attention it deserves. A breakthrough in this much neglected area was made recently with "Bias-Free Illustrations: Guidelines in Action," an exhibit co-sponsored by the CIBC with the Textbook Committee of the New York Chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA).

The show has been well received in the publishing and graphic arts fields, and illustrators have acknowledged its consciousness-raising effects. (Even the New York *Daily News* ran a favorable review of the exhibit in its January 26th edition.)

The CIBC is currently working with the AIGA and NOW to develop guidelines for illustrators; these will be included in a catalog of the Bias-Free exhibit made possible by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. Selections from the guidelines will be featured in a future issue of the *Bulletin*.

Responding to Racism and Sexism

New Values Challenge Old Assumptions

By Dr. Alvin Poussaint

Dr. Alvin Poussaint, noted psychiatrist and faculty member of Harvard University Medical School, delivered the opening day's keynote address at the CIBC-TC conference (see page 12). He raised a number of issues that have vital implications for parents, educators and publishers. A member of our staff subsequently visited Dr. Poussaint in Boston and recorded his elaborations of the issues raised in the address. Highlights of that conversation are presented below. The comments are arranged according to concept and are not necessarily in the order in which they were presented.

Dr. Poussaint began his speech by stating that textbooks in the U.S., far from being an educating influence, often assault children. He said:

"All children in the U.S. must cope with racism constantly, sometimes with a great deal of pain and horror. For minority children, books are often an assault which injures them and interferes with their development. The psychological effect of books on self image is powerful. Books that present only white models produce in Black children a wish to, or a feeling that, the way to make it, to get ahead, or to be worthwhile, is to be white. This leads to self-negation, not only about skin color but also about other aspects that have to do with being Black. Time was when Blacks sat around wishing their hair was long and their lips were thin and their noses were narrow. The energy spent on doing that has led to all kinds of defenses—trying to be like white people, turning on oneself and hating other Blacks. Or they would go to extremes and develop, say, Oxford accents and hope that would bring acceptance. These mechanisms openly attack children with unobtainable white norms, which damage very early and limit their options in all sorts of ways—most important, psychologically."

Dr. Poussaint talked about the recent publicity given to the Shockleys and the Jensens as another assault on Black children.

"Their claim of Blacks' genetic inferiority does violence to unborn Black children. That is not to be taken lightly as some type of academic exercise. That is a cover—under the

label of social science—to promote racist attitudes and more assaults.

"Book editors often think that the inclusion of positive models in books will make children feel good about themselves. Now perhaps positive models will do *part* of the job, but this device may backfire when negative content pervades the reality of their lives.

"There is a need for children's books that not only reflect the reality of the ghetto experience, but explain the causes and take the onus for the conditions off the minority child and his or her parents.

"How much information can children digest and understand about our society's problems? How much can we teach them about these problems? At the age of three, children begin to understand the issue of people mistreating others and that it is not right to do certain things to other people. Their socialization in this area begins in nursery school. Certainly, young children would have difficulty conceptualizing institutional or social oppression, but we can help them develop a sense of fairness, of working with people, of sharing. Three-year-olds are aware of racial issues, but too few school teachers know how to deal with these issues.

"It's very hard to teach the truth, because one can't teach in the schools that many aspects of the American system should be changed because they function to oppress people. This concept is very threatening to people in power.

"Given that students become socialized according to a society's value network, it's not surprising that textbooks reflect and reinforce racism and sexism in our schools.

"Fairy tales sow the seeds of racism and sexism. The 'beautiful, fair princess' concept has many implications, and it is a tool of indoctrination. Santa Claus, the great white father and all those white religious images are similar tools. It's no wonder that Blacks grow up with warped images about what's beautiful and good. It is pounded into them.

"We talk a great deal about self concept, but I don't think we really know what self concept is. We know it has something to do with how people feel about themselves. But there is another dimension of self concept that we often neglect. The question is not just 'Who am I,' or 'What am I,' but 'What shall I become?' *Before* some children are even born we can predict that part of their self image will be negative, thus limiting the options they perceive as being available to them in society. If a Puerto Rican child feels that he cannot become president of the United States, that feeling is a component of that Puerto Rican child's self image. Therefore, it can be said that a child's concept of his or her future options influences his/her self image in the present.

"Psychologists and psychiatrists generally hold that children develop *positive* self concepts as the result of feelings that come from mastering skills and of learning how to cope

with, and survive in, their environment. Learning skills engenders feelings of being effective as a human being. That is extremely important because if you just hang up signs that say, 'Black Is Beautiful,' children won't learn the skills needed to participate fully in society and to feel that they are worthwhile. All of the 'Black Is Beautiful' posters, sloganeering and stories in the world will not have the desired effects.

"What finally, does this mean? I think textbooks should contain lessons which are instructive *beyond* the story level. Children must be made to feel that they, too, are contributing to society. You can't just present a story about a Black or Chicano doctor as a model, for example. There must be input as to how one becomes a doctor and how one must develop skills. The story should also delineate the obstacles that have in the past and still today confront Blacks and other minorities who want to become doctors.

"Textbooks teach white children how to be white racists and white supremacists. They teach them that Third World groups are not to be valued, that they're not worth thinking and talking about and that if they *are* worth talking about, it is because they in some way conform to a white model. Cultural racism as expressed in educational materials limits the development of white children and engenders in them the neurotic tendency towards scapegoatism instead of helping them to perceive real courses of action. It also provides them with a false basis for their own self esteem. Their self esteem is not based on real things but on the alleged inferiority of someone else. And it frequently gives them a sense that they are owed something because they are white.

"We must also be aware that new and better books can do just so much. Society is being resegregated even as books are being improved. After all, books are only one aspect. I don't know if they can undo all the other things that the children are learning."

Dr. Poussaint's talk was interspersed with frequent references to the political aspects of the social sciences and the politics involved in maintaining our society's value system.

"I'm not saying social science is worthless. I'm saying that social science can be used politically—either for you or against you, to support a certain value system or to tear it down. For example, we assume it is normal for adolescents to rebel against their parents. That's human nature, we say. Separation from one's parents is a sign of maturity, we say. Why do we believe this? It's not that way in other cultures. In other cultures part of your maturity is to be related to your family and to help build that family structure. Yet, in our society we stigmatize people who still live with their parents at the age of twenty-five. We say they are 'dependent' and 'haven't grown up yet.' This is an example of a culturally determined value judgment.

"For a long time, psychologists and psychiatrists have contributed to the oppression of women in our society. When people propagate the theory of penis envy and claim to know what is a healthy or unhealthy role for females—and call these propositions science—then we're really in trouble. Even women believed these things. They believed that, scientifically and biologically, their role was to be passive. Women used to enter psychotherapy because they were too aggressive. Psychiatrists would encourage women to drop out of law school, asking 'Why do you take on that masculine occupation? Do you have trouble about your identity?' Women would get nervous and would go have children. Yet this was regarded as science—until the feminist movement called it by its rightful name, got sophisticated enough to attack oppression.

"As psychologists and psychiatrists, we have the option of calling things unhealthy or sicknesses—just by fiat. But we never called racism an illness or disturbance. We don't have anything in the diagnostic manual labeled 'acute bigotry syndrome.' There's no such thing, but that would stand on firmer ground than a lot of the other syndromes in psychiatric manuals. The reason it's not labeled a disturbance is because it's part of the culture. It depends on what you decide to legitimize in a society."

Dr. Poussaint noted other traits and values which we have long assumed and have ascribed to human nature, and must now start to question.

"Why are competitiveness and individualism emphasized in the American culture and considered healthy by psychologists and psychiatrists? Psychiatry in this country is individualistic to the core. Communal orientations have been de-emphasized in favor of individual emancipation—which, of course, fits very nicely into the social/economic pattern of the American system.

"Any educational program has value content. We in this country must decide what kinds of values we want our children to have. Do we want them to grow up to be competitive and individualistic? Is that what makes for success? Does that make sense any more?

"The perversion of competition is one of this society's most serious problems. Competitiveness with oneself to develop oneself is fine. But when the primary focus is the beating down of other people (which it frequently is in our culture)—that is, feeling successful even when you aren't because others have failed—that is wrong and unhealthy. This attitude is clearly destructive to human relationships in that it encourages the wish for the failure or total defeat of other people. People sometimes hesitate to form close relationships out of fear of making themselves vulnerable to competition and being destroyed. They tend, instead, to play it close to the chest, not letting people in. Competitiveness promotes paranoia and suspiciousness of other people.

"Individualism is a component of the American competitive spirit. Individualists feel that what they want to do takes supreme precedence over what's good for the community. People become so individualistic that they say if I need money and can get it, my success is legitimate—even if other people are wiped out.

"Competitiveness and individualism are tied in with the racial question. If one is very competitive and needs to feel superior, one is more open to prejudice and scapegoatism. If there were less competitiveness and individualism in our society, there would be less need for scapegoating and for feeling threatened by other people's achievement.

"Children can and should be taught how to develop and grow without competing with, and seeking to destroy, other people. They can and should be taught how to care for themselves and for others at the same time. It's possible; we just don't do it.

"Recently I visited China with a group of American physicians. We

met with the doctor who was most responsible for the eradication of venereal disease in that country. We were anxious to know about new measures that we could apply here. 'You'll never get rid of venereal disease in America,' he said. 'You'll have educational campaigns to encourage people to go to their physicians, but you're not going to get rid of venereal disease.' We said, 'Why not?' And he said, 'Because in America you think that people have the right to have VD.'

"Many of the 'rights' that we have long assumed to be inviolable may not be 'rights' at all. I think that we often get confused about someone's 'right' to do this or that. For instance, the professionals have psychologized and medicalized alcoholism. Is alcoholism a disease? Do people have a right to be an alcoholic? Do they have a right to bring that on their families and neighbors? That can be socially dealt with as a political question, not just an individual medical question. Look at what's going on now about people's right to smoke in public places. We're beginning to get laws saying people cannot smoke in certain places because it interferes with the rights of other people. It's *not* an individual's right to smoke if it's harming others. Venereal disease is in that same category, because a person is also damaging other people by not getting treatment. Yet when we promote VD programs, it's in terms of an individual's health, not in terms of legislating corrective action against persons who may harm everybody else.

"We need new ways of thinking and new concepts of the values we hold dear. But with new values it will be possible to get rid of VD, and it will be possible, by the same token, to get rid of racism.

"In conclusion, our society places far too much stress on individualism, and not enough on the recognition of what's good for the community. We have got to develop among children a respect for other people's rights and the capacity to know when to submerge their own needs to those of others. This is the kind of value system that children's books of the future must promote."

About the Author
Dr. Alvin Poussaint, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is co-author (with Dr. James Comer) of Black Child Care.

Responding to Racism and Sexism

Children's Books as a Liberating Force

By Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón

We must bear in mind that books are an important element of "the industry of culture" as well as "normative" elements in culture transmission. As economic and social phenomena, they are subject to the forces which characterize these two domains of life in society—the forces of the market place and those of social groups. Books for children are not exempt from such considerations.

Because of the close relationship between economic and social processes, books as a form of cultural transmission reflect the prevailing values of society. In fact, they tend to mirror the values of those groups which exercise control or authority. Hence, books are not neutral objects for the transmission of knowledge but are instruments for perpetuating the existing distribution of power and privilege within a particular society. In American and Puerto Rican society, most books, particularly school books, are vehicles for instilling the ideology of the privileged sectors. That is, one of their important functions is to aid in internalizing, among others, the following: positive representation of the economics of capitalist society; positive representation of the dominant classes and of their life styles as models for emulation; positive justification for existing class structures.

Books also help to internalize negative representations of oppressed people, particularly with regard to their physiological and psychological make-up; they also stress the responsibility of the oppressed themselves with regard to their present status and condition. The overall objective, of course, is to foster psychological acceptance of the status quo and the absolution of inequities. Books, then, serve to manipulate behavior, to condition the masses into accepting the role of the dominant classes as they themselves have defined it, and to accept their own oppressed role as it has been defined for them by others.

Mass media play an important part in the domination process, and books are no exception. Moreover, the part played by children's books is critical since their educative function (which, regarding our people, can more properly be described as indoctrination for oppression) enhances a socialization process aimed at conformity, thus assuring, through diverse psychological means, the perpetuation of oppression.

Within this total scheme, it is indeed rare to find a neutral book. What is generally found is a book representing either the values of the dominant ideological structure or those of the oppressed ones. But since the economics of book production and distribution is mainly the preserve of the dominating classes, the net result is that the values of the privileged classes prevail. The representation of the points of view and values of the oppressed from their own perspective—*la vision de los vencidos*—is exceptional.

This social process is to a great extent, though not solely, responsible for the fact that most books and printed materials about the oppressed, nonwhites, the minorities, have been written by Anglo authors. And I must state here my firm belief that most Anglo authors are incapable of depicting adequately in their writings the lives of minority groups. Leaving aside personal considerations and granting good intentions, this judgment springs from observations on the perceptions and attitudes of Anglos about other groups. These reflect the basic subordination in which nonwhite groups have been placed and the rationalizations developed by the system to justify exploitation of those groups. Internalization of "things as they are" is part of the socialization of most Anglo authors, including liberal ones, and is reflected in the written and pictorial content of their books. This accounts for their omission of certain historical facts or distortions of history, misrepresentation of present conditions, as well as misrepresentation of white oppression. Therefore, most Anglo-authored books are not conducive to the recuperation of our own groups but rather to the preservation of existing stereotypes.

I must also say that although I believe books about non-whites should be written by non-white authors, this should not be construed to mean that such authors are wholly free from the errors and mistakes characteristic of Anglos. Let us not forget that nonwhite groups have been dominated in society and that for years have been exposed to a process of cultural erosion, self-degradation and emulation of the dominant groups. In many cases this has led our own people to believe the stereotypes assigned to us. It has led to the formation of a colonized mentality which needs serious scrutiny. Nevertheless, I have no doubt that "minority" authors have a sensibility, a consideration for and a knowledge about their groups that is generally lacking in alien ones. I consider such basic affective elements of prime importance in developing books and printed materials which portray adequately our people, our culture and our land.

Within the context of the preceding remarks, let us now examine **The Puerto Rican Case,** which has many points in common with other oppressed groups in the U.S.

Puerto Rico has been a subordinated society for 482 years. That period of time has seen a change in metropolitan power, but the basic contours of colonialism have remained unaltered. Despite foreign control and power, first by Spain and later by the U.S., Puerto Ricans developed a culture and society in opposition to the metropolitan powers—something we may call "the culture of resistance"—*la cultura de la resistencia.* It developed into a coherent social fabric which has assured its cohesion as a nation and its survival as a people different from Spaniards and North Americans. In the absence of power to control their institutions and promote national and cultural preservation, Puerto Ricans have been forced to resort mainly to psychological constructs as the only alternatives available for defending themselves against eroding influences, both locally based and emanating from the centers of power in the metropole. That irritating Puerto Rican hermetism or "passivity" vis-à-vis the colonizer is one of the most important of these psychological responses.

This "underground" national culture, which has never been able to develop fully, manifested itself in diverse, overt conflicts with Spanish interests, ranging from smuggling to open rebellion. Finally, it gained "official" acceptance in 1897, but with the accession to power of a new metropole conflicts started anew which have not ceased from 1898 to the present.

What have been the effects of these historical factors on book design, particularly for children's books? The ideological and pictorial content of books during the Spanish domination were aimed at making Puerto Ricans second-class Spaniards. They presented positive images of Spanish oppression; sought to make loyal Spanish citizens of Puerto Ricans; fostered the acceptance of social inequality; stimulated beliefs in the basic inability of Puerto Ricans to cope with their environment and in deprecatory qualifications about themselves; sought to retard the development of national elements; reinfored the subordination of women; stimulated social inequalities; and sought to instill perpetual fear of independence. This ideological matrix has not varied and now is geared to favor the U.S. rather than Spain.

Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón at children's curriculum center in Puerto Rico.

Let us now take a closer look at books for Puerto Ricans written in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico.

The CIBC surveyed 100 books on Puerto Rican themes, and the prevailing trends found were those of cultural stereotyping and historical misrepresentation (see Vol. 4, Nos. 1 & 2). Those books are filled with Puerto Ricans as they are paternalistically perceived by white Americans—a simple and contented people who need the blessed hand of the good, white American overseer. Cultural misrepresentations are common since the facts that are presented contradict existing social norms. Cultural deprecation is also frequent in the form of

negative elements about the culture being depicted, in the emphasis on negative behavior, in stressing particular cultural traits in an isolated fashion, in placing the dominant culture in a superior position to the Puerto Rican one and, finally, in presenting assimilation as the ultimate goal. In addition, class biases predominate. These may take various forms, but some of the more common ones are the omission of the working class, the negative depiction of low status occupations and stress on prevailing middle-class values. The final touch usually comes in the representation of sexism as an accepted and actually enjoyed condition of Puerto Rican women, disregarding the liberation struggle women have waged throughout history.

An examination of books developed in Puerto Rico, particularly textbooks used in the school system, also reveals characteristics inherent in a system aimed at dominating the individual and fostering maximum conformism. Some of the salient ideological elements found in these books are:

a) Sexism. The portrayal of young or adult females in such traditional roles as cooks, seamstresses, housewives, child bearers and custodians of children. Young males are shown in active play, and most men are portrayed in the occupational world. While females work exclusively as teachers or house maids, men are represented as salespeople, policepeople, conductors, milk carriers, mail carriers, firefighters, gardeners, shoemakers, carpenters. In relation to men, females are presented in a subservient position and children are, in turn, subservient to parents and teachers.

b) Classism. Bias in favor of the upper classes pervades the pictorial content of children's books. The setting, objects, activities and behavior are middle class. The language, too, is class-bound and tends to be removed from the experience of the majority of Puerto Rican children, who are poor. The island setting is often a serene paradise. Thus, the characters presented could be any middle-class people in any tropical place—except one's own identifiable country.

c) Racism. In many of the books, the role of Black Puerto Ricans in the culture of the island has been conspicuously omitted. Where Black people are depicted, they look in many cases like whites in blackface and are more a decorative than an integral racial element. In one reader series, blackness does not emerge until the fourth book and seems more like forced integration than a strong racial element of the Puerto Rican people. This representation of the Black Puerto Rican continues to impose whiteness on them and perpetuates the feeling of "shame" developed and nurtured in the society at large.

d) Negative representation of Puerto Ricanness. Emphasized here are the negative factors of the island (smallness, no resources), and qualities which cosmeticize domination (pacific, docile conduct). Omitted are people and events which oppose the colonial system.

e) Positive representation of North Americans. The books emphasize the intellectual and technical achievements of the U.S. and its "generosity" to Puerto Rico. Omitted is mention of the enormous profits which leave the island every year and go to U.S. stockholders. Reinforcement of the positive U.S. image is accomplished by stressing U.S. holidays and political figures, and by subtle inferences that any departure of U.S. power from Puerto Rico would lead to chaos and anarchy. Further reinforcement is made through positive identification of Puerto Rican figures favorably oriented towards the U.S. and negative identification of those who are not.

f) Language manipulation to downplay the concepts of freedom and independence. Words like "nation," "home land," "republic" and "independence" (*nación, patria, república, independencia*) are systematically omitted. Semantics that might foster a feeling of national identity are studiously avoided, since it is believed that this would promote a desire for national independence.

g) Falsification of history. Historical facts are misrepresented to suit an education for domination. Among the most commonly omitted facts, especially from school texts, is the opposition of Black Puerto Ricans to slavery. This omission fosters the idea that abolition was merely an act of mercy on the part of white slaveholders. Also omitted or inadequately explored are the political uprisings against Spain and the U.S. This is supplemented in one of several ways—by the total omission of Puerto Ricans identified with the independence struggle, by their negative representation or by their representation in limited ways that exclude their political activities.

There is no doubt in my mind that the present ideological content of children's books for and about Puerto Ricans has as an ultimate goal the perpetuation of political and economic subordination. New educational materials are needed that will offer our people an alternative for cultural and national recuperation. Such an alternative should have among its aims the following: to develop pride in our heritage, with a new emphasis on the contributions of peasants and urban workers to Puerto Rican culture and society; to focus on the historical struggle of Puerto Ricans for freedom and foster appreciation for those who have devoted their lives to its achievement; to reveal the true consequences of colonialism and imperialism, and to present all cultural elements conducive to national integration. There is no doubt that such an alternative requires new textbooks and the "rewriting" of Puerto Rican history. Our children should be able to "feel" themselves in the books they read. They must come to believe that freedom from oppression is a natural right of all human beings. Like all traits of a liberating culture, this approach will be opposed by those who dominate. This is to be expected, but it shall not keep us from pursuing our goal because the infusion of any liberating element, no matter how insignificant it might appear, is a step forward in the ultimate liberation of Puerto Rico. I know that in efforts to make freedom from oppression a reality for all we can count on people of good will here and in other places. To them we say:

> La mano que no se afloja
> hay que estrecharla en seguida;
> la mano que no se afloja,
> china, negra, blanca o roja,
> china, negra, blanca o roja,
> con nuestra mano tendida.[1]

1. Nicolás Guillén, *Antología Mayor*, "Mi Patria es Dulce por Fuera," 1972.

About the Author

Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón, Professor of Sociology at the University of Puerto Rico, also serves as consultant to the Office of Economic Opportunity in San Juan. The author of many books and articles for adult readers, he is also the editor and principal writer of Acción Social, *a series of books for Puerto Rican children.*

Textbook Battle in Mississippi

Part II

In the last issue of the *Bulletin* (Vol. 6, No. 8) we reported on a Mississippi court case involving two Mississippi history textbooks. One—*Your Mississippi* by John Bettersworth—has (with revisions) been the state approved text for the required ninth-grade history course since 1962. The other book is *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, a new text edited by James W. Loewen and Charles Sallis, which was submitted for adoption in 1974. Although up to five books in any one subject area can be approved for adoption in Mississippi schools, *Conflict and Change* was not approved.

A suit attempting to force adoption of *Conflict and Change* charges that the present and previous textbook committees have approved "only those texts which minimize, ignore or [degrade] the role of blacks and other minorities" and "which present historical events in a manner sympathetic to principles of racial segregation and discrimination, black inferiority and 'white supremacy.'"

According to Melvin Leventhal of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, representing the plaintiffs, the case should come to trial in about a year.

The CIBC, after reviewing both books, finds *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* to be superior to the Bettersworth text. While not without flaws, *Conflict and Change* was found to be one of the most progressive history textbooks available. Portions of the CIBC's findings appear below; the full analysis can be obtained from the CIBC Racism and Sexism Resource Center for $2.50.

Format

The formats of the two books are distinct and here again *Conflict and Change* is far superior. The book begins by discussing the uses of history and how we can learn from it; how knowing about the past gives us power or gives power to those who control what we know of it; and how historical perspectives are affected by the ideologies of the people writing the history. Readers are told that:

> In every time period, you will have to determine for yourself which persons and acts you admire and which you regret. People in any time period decide what actions and people in the past they consider heroic. Thus the list of history's heroes slowly changes. By studying the past, you can learn that some of the great figures of our state's history will no longer be labeled heroes by generations to come; others, now forgotten by history, will be remembered for their courage and honor. . . .
>
> History is power. The people on top of society, those who determine its policies, know this. Therefore, they influence the way history itself is written. Poor people do not write history books. . . . The writers of history and of historical materials are usually members of the upper and middle classes of society, and so are their friends. Therefore, to some extent, historians may not tell what actually happened. They tell what they *think* happened . . . [and] they may write history in such a way that their own status can be explained and defended. . . .
>
> In order to understand why Mississippi is as it is, you have to understand the past. . . . Do not let other people, including the authors of this book, tell you the answers. Figure them out for yourself.

Giving more than just a pretty picture of Mississippi history, *Conflict and Change* includes photos like the one above of a Black church bombed in 1964.

Informative illustrations, graphs and maps are scattered throughout the text to further explain and amplify the material discussed. Short bibliographies are also interspersed to expand information on a period or individual being discussed. Marginal notations either capsulize material discussed in an adjoining paragraph, define terms used in the paragraph, or refer the reader to other related sections. Chapters end with annotated, supplementary reading lists which feature different viewpoints on particular topics (some of Bettersworth's writings are included). Stimulating and challenging questions and suggested projects are interspersed with the text.

In *Your Mississippi*, Bettersworth adheres to a linear, static design. The book is an almost unrelieved recitation of dates, governors and "non-issues" (such as the frequently discussed problems and progress of the state highway system), and its general tone is one of "boosterism." In addition to its extensive omissions and distortions, the book is almost totally lacking in analysis of the processes of social, economic and political change. For example, we read of the period after Reconstruction that: "Most of the laborers in Mississippi's factories were white men. Many were brought in from the North because Mississippi whites avoided factory work." No further explanation is given for this statement, no analysis offered as to the possible causes of the phenomenon described. Why Black people were passed over as Northern whites were brought in is not explored nor does the book probe the divisions between Black and white farmers and workers caused by white chauvinism, or the attempts by Black and white workers to overcome this false division and

unite around common grievances and concerns.

Because of his lack of analysis of social problems, Bettersworth's examples of improvement and change, even when not misrepresented, become distorted because they are cited out of context. The historical evolution, depth and severity of the problem to which they relate is never presented. For example:

> . . . the post war era saw progress in the education of blacks . . . the state spent millions of dollars to provide separate but equal facilities . . . by 1950 the state-aid project had provided 1,930 new classrooms for whites and 907 for blacks."

It is hard enough to understand how providing 1,930 classrooms for whites and 907 for Blacks would equalize such an inequitable situation. More to the point, however, Bettersworth has provided no information on the disparity in Black and white educational systems against which the "progress" of 907 new classrooms can be measured.

Women

Both books have a tendency to use "he," "him," "man," or "men" when referring to people of both sexes. *Conflict and Change* makes a greater attempt to overcome this terminology but still uses it much too often. Nevertheless, there is stark contrast between the two books' treatment of women. Both make references to the establishment of schools for women. Both refer to women in cultural fields. But there the similarity ends.

Conflict and Change mentions women in the general text and specific sections discuss women's roles and issues during various historical periods. Pictures and illustrations throughout the book portray specific women or depict women participating in activities under discussion or in scenes of everyday life.

Until the last chapter (on culture), which contains four pictures of specific women, women appear in very few illustrations in *Your Mississippi*. The two most prominent illustrations show white mistresses on plantations—one teaching "house servants" to read and the other watching slaves toiling in a field.

Bettersworth's treatment of Native American women includes: "Natchez Indians usually paid little attention to their women," "Natchez women were busy housewives," and "[Choctaw] women usually became fat as they grew older." Both books mention the sending of women to the French colony to marry bachelors. *Conflict and Change* states, "Their life was much harder than it had been in France, however, and at one point, to protest their living conditions, they staged a 'petticoat rebellion.'" *Your Mississippi* states that the "girls" were described as "'unusually coy and hard to please' . . . [and they] threatened to go home because they were having to eat cornbread instead of wheat bread."

Bettersworth tells us that at the 1861 secession convention, "Eager onlookers, many of them ladies, filled the galleries . . . [and a] group of Jackson ladies presented a blue flag with a white star to the convention." The book's only example of decisive action by women during the war describes how women in Jones County, an area of anti-confederate/anti-war activity, killed bloodhounds being used to track their men by feeding them meat sprinkled with red pepper. In a paragraph headed "Making Do," Bettersworth quotes a verse from a song sung by "Southern women" and then tells how "Southern people" made substitutes for scarce products. *Conflict and Change* mentions the same substitutes, but states, "In all these processes, women took the major role . . . white women had to supervise not only the home but in many cases the farm, plantation or business." The book then discusses other activities of "white" women in support of the war effort.

Bettersworth notes the work of Frances Willard in establishing the Women's Christian Temperance League, the establishment of the Masonic Women's Auxiliary and of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Finally, he cites the two Mississippi women who were crowned "Miss America" in the late '50's. Nowhere does he focus on or discuss women's rights or women's roles in Mississippi in an enlightened manner.

In the section titled "Women in the Future of Mississippi," *Conflict and Change* asks students to:

> Skim earlier chapters and count the number of different women mentioned by name in each chapter. Has the number increased in recent years? In what fields have most of these women worked?
>
> Only four of the bibliographies in this book have been about individual women. Has the book therefore been guilty of discrimination against women? Or is there another explanation? Help remedy the lack of information on women by doing research on a leading Mississippi woman and writing a short bibliography of her. Skim the index for a subject, or choose someone from your own community.

The authors of *Conflict and Change* clearly attempted to give prominence to women's concerns and issues. While they surpass *Your Mississippi's* treatment, much more should have been done. It is strongly urged that future editions of this textbook be revised to eliminate the too frequent use of "he" and "men" when referring to people. It is also critical that more information be researched and presented on the activities of women in Mississippi's history. The book states that the "denial of political rights [by the Constitution of 1890] did not stop Mississippi women from being active citizens," yet too few examples of women as "active citizens" are provided. Inclusion of short biographies of Hazel Brannon Smith, Belle Kearney, Nellie Nugent Somerville, Bessie C. Alford and other women referred to in the book would foster greater understanding of women's activities during important periods of Mississippi's history, and of female involvement in the struggle for human rights.

Civil Rights: '50's and '60's

Bettersworth's coverage of the civil rights struggle of the '50's and '60's is seriously distorted both by commission and omission. After maintaining in chapter 11 that the searing conflict of 1860 was not civil war but a "War between the States" or a "War for Southern Independence," the author calls the struggle for civil rights the "civil-rights war." Before offering his cursory remarks on this "war," he assures the reader that "gradually Mississippians, black and white, found that they could get along together—as they always had." Why, if Black and white had always related harmoniously, was there a "civil rights war"?

His answer would appear to be that the struggle was precipitated by outside forces, particularly the federal government which apparently was unaware of Black/white togetherness. Bettersworth fails to cite a single anti-segregation action by Black Mississippians up to 1965, when he notes

that "Federal voting registrars moved into the state to help register black people to vote. [Why they were needed is not mentioned.] Civil rights marches and boycotts followed." The clear implication is that the marches and boycotts, by unspecified people for unspecified reasons, resulted from the presence of federal registrars.

In a paragraph headed "Resistance," one reads that "After the Supreme Court's desegregation decision of 1954, Mississippians [all Mississippians?] took vigorous measures to resist." Resistance took the form of establishing the White Citizens' Council (1954) and the State Sovereignty Commission (1956) "to take *the Mississippi* case to the rest of the nation [emphasis added]." We never read what these groups did—only that they were established. White violence against the civil rights movement is minimized and distorted. A riot ensued in 1962 as James Meredith was escorted into the University of Mississippi by federal marshals, but who rioted is not clear. "A Mississippian" was tried for the murder of Medgar Evers, but not convicted. Three civil-rights workers in Neshoba County were murdered but no names of victims or killers are given, no responsibility assigned, no questions raised about the response (or lack thereof) of state inatitutions to this violence.

Touching briefly on a few isolated incidents, Bettersworth concludes his minimal treatment by writing that William Waller, elected as governor in 1972, pioneered in appointing Blacks to office and that "one of his first moves was to desegregate the Highway Patrol." He fails to note a 1971 court order to desegregate the Patrol.

Most of the extremely scanty information presented on this era is offered not in a section dealing with this critical period in Mississippi and national history, but wedged into a listing of Mississippi governors from 1946-1970. For example, the 1954 Supreme Court decision is found under "J.P. Coleman." The author's coverage of the civil rights struggle would be grossly inadequate even in a U.S. history textbook published in 1965. Given that his book deals only with Mississippi and was revised in 1975, his failure to accurately present the conflict and change that Mississippi (and the nation) experienced during the civil rights struggle is inexcusable.

In comparison, *Conflict and Change* provides a 35-page analysis of "The Struggle for Civil Rights" from 1954-1967 (chapter 15), and 9 pages in chapter 16 are devoted to relations between the races from 1967 to 1973. Race is also discussed as it relates to other issues in other sections of the book dealing with this period. Some of the subheadings of chapter 15 convey a sense of the chapter's coverage: "Segregation of the Races," "Brown v. Board of Education," "White Reaction to the Supreme Court Decision," "Black Reaction to the Decision," "Citizens' Council Pressure," "White Opposition to the Councils," "The State Government and Segregation," "Black Voting Is Cut," "Mississippi's Anti-Integration Laws, 1956," "Violence Against Blacks," "Whites Oppose Black Registration," "The Freedom Riders," "Meredith and Ole Miss," "The Movement in the Delta," "The Freedom Summer of 1964," "Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman," "The Violence Spreads," "Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired [Fannie Lou Hamer]," "White Mississippians Work for Progress," "Token Desegregation in the Public Schools" and many, many more. Students would receive a broader understanding of this era if they read only these subheadings than they would by reading all of Bettersworth's discussion of the period.

A typical illustration from *Your Mississppi*—an "idyllic" picture of plantation life.

Summary

To fully appreciate the positive and, in many ways, unique characteristics of *Conflict and Change*, you have to read it yourself. The book is not without flaws, but it is far and away one of the best history textbooks to be found.

Your Mississippi is also worth reading as an example of "mythologized history." But in denying *all* students a rich and accurate history of their state it clearly fails to meet some of the Textbook Review Committee's major criteria:

> The scope and sequence of materials should be consistent with the valid findings of recent research.
>
> Whenever applicable, the content of texts should assure that the contributions of all ethnic groups at different socio-economic levels receive fair and equitable treatment.
>
> Illustrations should extend and expand the text, not merely echo what has been said in print.
>
> Suggested exercises and activities which help the student synthesize, review, and summarize the content should be included.
>
> The content of each text should be accurate, valid and up to date.
>
> Suggestions for study included in the text should not only promote an understanding of the materials presented but also should stimulate original thinking.

Conflict and Change provides an analysis of and abundant information about a complex and varied region of the U.S. The history of Mississippi has been particularly marked by the racism and oppression which characterize the general American experience and are the fundamental contradictions of our nation. With the publication of *Conflict and Change*, publishers and writers have a new model to emulate in the production of American history textbooks. They should be strongly urged to follow this book's example, since only the truth about our past can equip us to meet the challenges of the present and the future.

RACISM in Long Island School on Trial

In recent years, court cases have challenged such aspects of institutional racism in education as tracking, I.Q. testing, student discipline and suspension practices, hiring policies and textbook bias. Now, a court case in Seldon, Long Island, is focusing on the racist behavior and attitudes of teachers and the condoning of such behavior by school administrative authorities. A Native American woman (Blackfeet), Jeanne Baum, withdrew her thirteen-year-old daughter, Siba, from the predominantly white public school because of racist remarks made by Siba's English teacher, after repeated attempts to elicit a response from the school system had failed.

In June, 1975, the teacher returned a book report Siba had written on *Geronimo*, which contained the following statement:

> Geronimo, as other Indians, is seen as a blood-thirsty savage. He and his people were trying to defend their lands and their way of life from invaders, who are pictured as heroes, settlers and explorers. When the Indian fought back, he was the villain. And it still goes on now.

Siba also expressed the view that white people cannot write from or about a Native American point of view.

At the bottom of the report, Siba's teacher had written, "I agree with your feelings of anger. However, I have an uncle who is a Wamponoag Indian and his point of view is that Indians got what they deserved." Siba immediately questioned her teacher about the remark, and the teacher made further derogatory remarks about Native Americans. Many of these remarks were repeated the next day at a meeting Ms. Baum held with the principal, the assistant principal and the teacher—a meeting which Ms. Baum taped.

The teacher's comments reflect the stereotypes, bias and lack of sensitivity common to many white Americans—including white educators. She admitted having stated in class that "some Indians are lazy," that "there are some Indians who should be ashamed of themselves" and that her uncle was "ashamed of the atrocities which they [Indians] committed." She admitted having said that Siba had a "right to be proud" because her mother "is not on a reservation. Your mother is working and she is raising her children. . . ," implying that Indians living on reservations who are unemployed or whose children have been removed from their custody* have no right to be proud. She equated the discrimination faced by some European ethnic immigrants with the genocidal practices against Native Americans. She further denied responsibility for the statement written on the book report by asserting that it was not her opinion but her uncle's, and that Siba and her mother had "misunderstood" and "misinterpreted" it.

She gave as her reason for writing the comment the desire "to make Siba see that not everyone shares her point of view" (during the trial she stated that teachers must often play a "devil's advocate role"), although it was clear from the report that Siba is only too aware of "the other point of view about Native people.

The tape of the meeting reveals the teacher's willingness to apologize "if [Siba] has been upset" and "if you [Ms. Baum] feel affronted" because of her remarks. She would not, however, grant that the remarks were racist, only that they had been misinterpret-

*25 per cent of Native American children are removed from their parents' custody by white welfare agencies and courts.

ed. The principal cautioned her, saying "I don't want you apologizing unless you have a reason to apologize. . . . I have the status of all the teachers in the school to keep in mind." He later suggested that the teacher hold a class discussion "to clear up anything that was misinterpreted. Whether or not you put in a formal apology, I think, is something for you to decide. . . . Not too long [a discussion], don't carry it on for the entire period. . . . If the class wants to discuss it . . . use your professional judgment on how far you should let that go."

At the meeting, it was decided that Siba would not have to return to her English teacher's class for the week or so remaining in the school term. It was also agreed that Ms. Baum would arrange for a Native American speaker to address the class. However, when she called the principal the next day to confirm the arrangements, he told her that a higher authority had vetoed the speaker idea out of fear of a "confrontation."

The next day, the teacher allegedly told her class (as an "apology" for her previous comments) that her remarks had been misinterpreted and that she regretted any misunderstanding. "Some Indians in this class will tell you I said certain things," she added. "So I want you to know that what they say is not true." (The teacher was not yet aware that a Native American speaker would not be appearing.) After talking with the parents of two children in the class, who substantiated the substance of the teacher's comments, Ms. Baum withdrew Siba from school.

Is Ethnic the Right Word?

ethnic *n* -s [ME, fr. LL *ethnicus*, fr. Gk *ethnikos*, adj.] *obs* : HEATHEN, PAGAN (impure ~s —John Milton)

²eth·nic \'ethnik, -nēk\ *adj* [ME, fr. LL *ethnicus*, fr. Gk *ethnikos* foreign, gentile, national, fr. *ethnos* nation + *-ikos* -ic — more at ETHNOS] **1** : of or relating to the Gentiles or to nations not converted to Christianity : HEATHEN, PAGAN (ancient ~ revels of a faith long since forsaken —H.W. Longfellow) **2 a** : relating to community of physical and mental traits possessed by the members of a group as a product of their common heredity and cultural tradition (influenced by ~ and cultural ties —J.F. Kennedy) (the boundaries along the West African coast were not plotted with regard to the ancient ~ frontiers —A.H. Young-O'Brien) **b** : having or originating from racial, linguistic, and cultural ties with a specific group (Negroes, Irish, Italians, Germans, Poles, and other ~ groups —F.J. Brown & J.S. Roucek) (displaced persons, 655 of them ~ Germans —*N.Y. Herald Tribune*) **3** : originating in an exotic primitive culture (~ music)

²ethnic \"\ *n* -s [Gk *ethnikos*, neut. of *ethnikos* national] : ETHNICON

eth·ni·cal \-ə'ikəl, -nik-\ *adj* [*ethnic* + *-al*] : ETHNIC 2, ETHNOLOGIC

During the summer, Ms. Baum contacted numerous groups, seeking assistance in her efforts to get a response from the school authorities. Meetings were held with school personnel, and an initial agreement was reached to set up a human relations steering committee for conducting programs in the schools. No concrete results were forthcoming, however. When the fall term arrived, Ms. Baum continued to keep Siba out of school and issued the following conditions for her return:

1. The School District must recognize Ms. Duarte's (the teacher's) written and spoken remarks as racist.

2. The School District, using the existing union-management procedure, must bring Ms. Duarte up on charges of unprofessional conduct.

3. And *most important*, the School District must acknowledge that ignoring racist behavior is tantamount to endorsing or condoning racism.

4. The School District must issue a policy statement condemning racism and clearly stating that racist behavior will not be tolerated in the School District.

5. The School District must establish a firm date for the implementation of the agreed upon Steering Committee which will have the authority, responsibility, and control for establishing and implementing human relations/race relations (all groups) programs throughout the School District at all levels.

The School District took Ms. Baum to court under the state compulsory education act, charging her with neglect and stating that Siba's "physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of being impaired as a result of failure of her parent to exercise minimum degree of care. The respondent though financially able to do so has failed and neglected to provide said child with education, to wit: That the parent of said child has without just cause or valid reason withheld said child from attendance at the Seldon Junior High School."

Ms. Baum explained her actions as follows in her motions for dismissal of the charges brought against her:

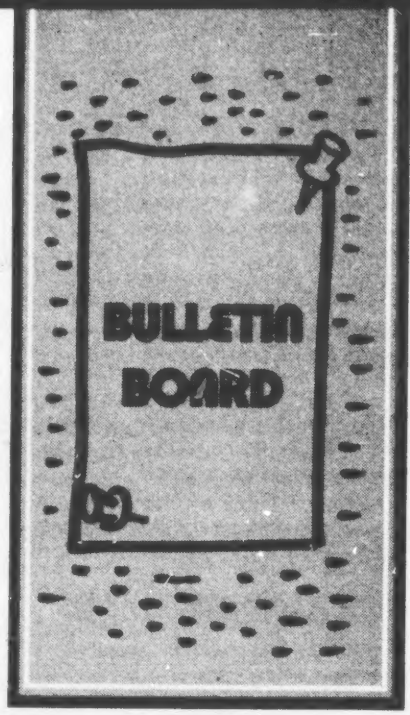
> I am most eager for my child to receive an education, but not one that will destroy her sense of pride in herself and her people and strip from her the dignity and self-worth that is an indispensable attribute of any human being. I know that if a Jewish child, for example, had written a book review of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and her teacher had written at the bottom thereof, "I have an uncle who is Jewish and his point of view is that the Jews got what they deserved," there would—and should—have been an immediate and strong reaction from the entire community. I also know that the school system would have taken steps forthwith to insure that such a remark would never be made again and that some program of rectification and education would have been put into effect. It is well known that Native American history, as written and interpreted by white people, is inaccurate, misleading and often openly racist, thus giving both Native American and other children a false impression of the background and culture of people who have been described as the landlords of this country. I simply do not want my daughter, or anyone else's child, to be indoctrinated with misinformation that may affect the entire course of her life. This is why I took the step I did, not to be a neglectful mother but to be one cognizant of her child's needs and expectations.

Ms. Baum retained the services of the noted activist lawyer, William Kunstler. She moved that the judge deny the prosecution motion and instead find that her actions were justified. Three days of testimony were heard by Judge Stanley Abrams of the Family Court in late December and early January. The judge is now awaiting the submission of briefs from defense and prosecution. The legal alternatives include ordering Siba back to school, ordering Siba removed from her mother's custody or finding that Ms. Baum had justifiable provocation to keep Siba out of school.

Ms. Baum has affirmed her determination to keep Siba out of school if the judge's decision goes against her or does not require the school district to take appropriate actions to constructively deal with racism. Because of muscular dystrophy Ms. Baum's income is dependent on federal disability payments and a legal defense fund has been established to assist her in meeting the costs incurred in her struggle to confront racism. We urge readers to send donations (tax exempt), **made payable** to American Indian Community House, to:

Jeanne Baum
Legal Defense Fund
166 Stuyvesant Drive
Seldon, New York 11784

For additional information, call Ms. Baum at (516) 473-6405.



A two-day conference, "Our Response to Racism and Sexism: Working with Children's Books to Shape the Future," was jointly sponsored by the General Assistance Center at Teachers College, Columbia University and the CIBC on November 21 and 22, 1975 (see Vol. 6, No. 8). More than 200 participants from school districts throughout New York and New Jersey, public and private libraries, independent schools, community councils, publishing firms and colleges heard distinguished speakers and participated in workshops for developing strategies to combat racist and sexist stereotypes in children's trade and textbooks.

Featured as keynote speakers were Dr. Alvin Poussaint, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and co-author with Dr. James Comer of *Black Child Care* (Simon & Schuster, 1975), and Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón, Professor of Sociology, University of Puerto Rico. (See pages 2 and 4 for highlights of their addresses.) Also featured was a panel of eight authors and book specialists who described their personal experiences as minority Americans and the effects of discrimination in publishing on their professional lives.

The panel participants were Jack Agüeros, CIBC contest winner (for *El Pito de Plata de Pito*); Mary Lou Byler, editor of the newsletter of the Association on American Indian Affairs; Dr. Luis Nieves Falcón, author (*Acción Social* series); Eloise Greenfield, author (*Paul Robeson*, Crowell, 1975); Armando Rendon, author (*Chicano Manifesto*, Random House, 1971); Elinor Wong Telemaque, writer on Chinese American affairs; Jack Leventhal, lawyer, NAACP; and moderator Warren Halliburton, author (*Harlem: A History of Broken Dreams*, Doubleday, 1973).

Jack Agüeros stated that despite the centuries-old relationship between Spanish-speaking people and U.S. society, our government and traditions still ignore in the most flagrant ways the validity of Spanish culture.

Mary Lou Byler noted the scornful response of many publishers to her criticisms of how Native Americans are depicted in children's books.

Dr. Falcón abhorred the fact that a book series he and his assistants developed to instill cultural pride in Puerto Rican children is regarded in establishment education circles as "subversive" material which contributes to "alienating" these children from the larger society.

Eloise Greenfield stated that books for and about Black children must not become mere "exercises in esthetics," but should consciously counteract racism.

Armando Rendon noted the offensiveness of certain constraints that are placed on Chicano writers. Chicano authors, he said, are often required to submit an English translation of their manuscripts because the material is more than likely to be published *only* in English.

Elinor Wong Telemaque cited the difficulty of maintaining the integrity of Asian American cultures in the face of the many stereotypes and deprecatory attitudes about Asian Americans which proliferate.

Warren Halliburton emphasized that since textbook sales comprise the bulk of publishers' business, more minority editors are needed on their staffs to insure responsiveness to minority needs and perspectives.

Jack Leventhal, substituting for his wife, author Alice Walker, discussed the current legal attempts to replace a racist Mississippi State history textbook with *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*—an alternative pluralistic one (see page 7).

The conference divided into workshops for the afternoon sessions, which were introduced by Dr. Beryle Banfield, president of the CIBC. The workshops examined learning materials dealing with Asian, African, African American, Hispanic and Native American cultures and focused on: 1) presentations and discussions of criteria and categories of racism and sexism in learning materials; 2) analysis and discussion of racist and sexist stereotypes in excerpts from existing textbooks; and 3) discussion of classroom strategies and ideas for developing awareness in students of racism and sexism in materials and for identifying alternative non-racist and non-sexist materials.

Workshops dealt with each of the following areas: Hispanic and bilingual materials (all levels), early childhood grades (pre-K through 2), middle elementary school grades (3-4), upper elementary school grades (4-6), and secondary school grades. The workshop leaders were Frances Dory, Elinor Wong Telemaque, Jean Carey Bond, William Loren Katz, Robert Moore, Jean Bain, Albert V. Schwartz and Florence Jackson.

Cora Rust was conference coordinator for the CIBC.

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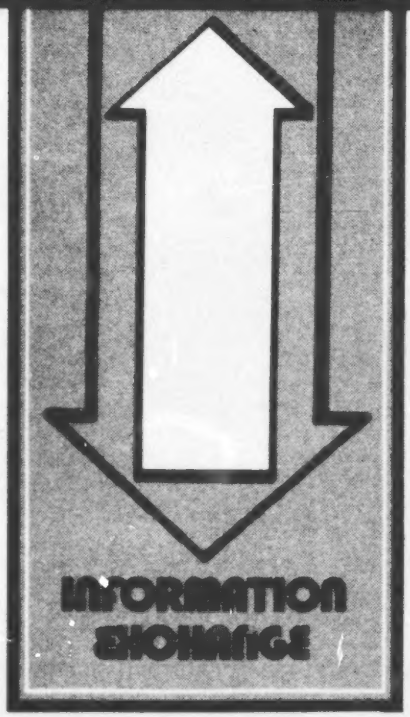
Write to the Contest Committee, Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10023.
CONTEST ENDS DEC. 31, 1976



"Corporations and Child Care," written by a collective of women researchers and published by the Women's Research Action Project, investigates the new phenomenon of **profit-making day-care** services provided by multimillion dollar corporations. These centers are evaluated for their effectiveness in providing good care for children; a chapter is devoted to "corporate values in the classroom (racism, sexism, hierarchy)." The extensive and critical report concludes with a section on alternatives to corporate child care and gives resources for those interested in pursuing the alternatives. The 70-page paperback is $1.25 for individuals and $2.00 for institutions; order from the Project at Box 119, Porter Square Station, Cambridge, Mass. 02140.

The John Henry Memorial Foundation, taking a Black perspective, now pursues a new approach to the **John Henry legend** and the heritage and life history of **Appalachian minorities**. It publishes a newsletter of past and future Foundation activities. Requests for the free newsletter should be addressed to the Foundation, PO Box 135, 419 Mercer St., Princeton, W. Va. 24740.

"Nomma" is the journal of the OBAC (Organization of **Black American Culture**) Writers Workshop. The anthology of poetry, fiction and essays can be ordered for $2 from the Workshop, 77 E. 35th St., Chicago, Ill. 60616.

The first book of the Mishomis 12-part children's educational series on the history of the **Ojibway Indian Nation** is available from the Red School House Graphics Workshop, 643 Virginia St., St. Paul, Minn. 55104. Single copies are $2.50 or $2 each for quantities of 25 or more.

A new listing of reprints, articles and major works has been issued by **feminist** publishing collective, KNOW, INC. To obtain a copy, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to PO Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15221.

"Children's News" is the bimonthly newsletter of the Childcare Switchboard, an information and referral service for **day-care** facilities in San Francisco. For a copy of the newsletter or information on the organization's work, write 3896 24th St., San Francisco, Cal. 94114. A donation is requested.

Youth Liberation is an organization working for reform of the political and legal rights of people under eighteen. A recent issue of their monthly publication, *FPS: a magazine of young people's liberation*, contains a subject index covering all issues of the magazine's five-year publishing history. It can be ordered for $10/year—$6 for people under eighteen—from Youth Liberation, 2007 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, Mich. 43104.

"You Never Hear About Any Struggles" is a guidebook to **teaching oral history** as a part of junior high school studies courses. It suggests ways teachers and students can utilize their community as a primary source material, learn to evaluate contemporary data, etc. The guide is intended for use in conjunction with standard material of the 1930's depression. The booklet is $1.50 (including postage) from Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., 431 So. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. 60605.

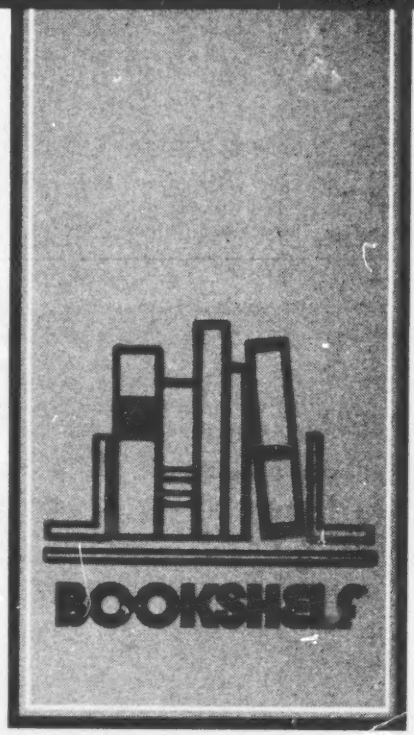
The National Youth Alternatives Project publishes *Youth Alternatives*, a newsletter informing agencies and youth workers of alternative social services for young people. The annual subscription rate to the monthly publication is $6 for individuals, $10 for institutions from Youth Alternatives, 1830 Connecticut Ave. NW, Wash. D.C. 20009.

The Smithsonian Institution has recently published *Workers and Allies: Female Participation in the American Trade Union Movement, 1824-1976*. The co-authors, Judith O'Sullivan and Rosemary Gorelick, trace 150 years of the **history of labor** through biographical sketches of the white and Third World women involved in the movement. The book costs $3 and can be ordered from the Institution at 1000 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, D.C. 20560.

"Mexico's Art and Chicano Artists" is a 70-page paperbound volume that traces the history of Mexican art and its influence on Chicano artists. The volume can be ordered for $2 from Ventura Press, PO Box 2268, Sunnyvale, Cal. 94087.

The Feminist History Research Project has recorded hundreds of hours of oral history with participants in the women's movement at the beginning of the century. Its first "living history" program on the struggle for **women's suffrage**, a 24-minute tape and slide presentation, is available to buy ($80) or rent ($25) from the project at PO Box 1156, Topanga, Cal. 90290.

There is a series of four books available from Bowker on **women's issues**. *Women in Public Office* ($19.95)is a biographical directory on the women holding local and federal government positions in the U.S. Both *Women and the "Equal Rights" Amendment* ($13.95) and *Discrimination Against Women* ($14.50) contain the transcripts of congressional hearings on these subjects. The fourth book in the series, *Women's Movement Media* ($13.95), is a source guide for locating many useful materials, including feminist children's books. The books can be ordered from R.R. Bowker Order Department, PO Box 1807, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.



What It's All About

by Norma Klein.
Dial Press, 1975, $5.95,
160 pages, grades 5-up

Bernadette's parents are divorced. Her Japanese American father, Fumio, lives in California. Eleven-year-old Bern lives a relatively "normal," middle-class life with her Jewish mom and stepfather, Gabe. She enjoys writing and playing with her best friend, Jonah. Her mother adopts Suzu, a Vietnamese orphan who becomes very attached to Bern. When Gabe loses his job, arguments flare between him and Mom until one day he splits while Bern is away in Boston attending her father's wedding to Peggy.

Bern is confused by the complicated goings on. She cannot understand why people get married if all they do is fight. She is torn between living with Fumio and Peggy, where she would have a "regular" two-parent family, or staying with Mom, Suzu and Jonah. Finally, Bern discovers that a family can be close, strong and loving even though it does not fit the two-parent mold.

Pluses: This is a warm, witty, down-to-earth, readable book about divorce and its effects on children. These modern times, when healthy relationships are difficult to develop and maintain, are appropriately reflected. On the whole, women are portrayed as strong and varied, not stereotypical or one-dimensional. For example, Mom's strong and independent personality is the basis of her conflict with Gabe, who assumes, according to convention, that men should support women but not vice versa. Bern is active, unpretentious, and has an open relationship with Jonah—"Just because one person is a boy and one person is a girl doesn't mean it's some big romance."

Minuses: Although one of Bern's parents is Japanese American, the Asian aspect of her identity is never dealt with except in terms of her Japanese name. She is portrayed as an all-American girl whose father just happens to be Japanese American. That's hard to swallow in this race conscious society. Moreover, classic stereotypical adjectives are used to describe Fumio—he is "quiet, extremely kind, polite." His image suffers in comparison to Gabe's strong one. Also, what message does the author wish to convey to Japanese American girls when she has Fumio marry only white women?

Lastly, Ms. Klein sinks to the depths of stereotyping when she lumps all Asian groups together: Bern explains that Mom adopted Suzu "so that we both would have an Oriental heritage." This cheap gimmick is definitely out of place. In-laws are cast in the old stereotype of being difficult to get along with: Bern's grandmother cannot get along with Gabe (although passive Fumio gets along very well with grandmother). And recalling those antiquated horror tales about step-parents, Bern playfully warns her new stepmother, Peggy, "you better not be wicked like the ones in the fairy tales."

Adults consistently dismiss children's questions with such comments as "you're too young to understand" or "it's too complicated to explain" (even Bern echoes this condescension when she talks to Suzu). The message seems to be that it is not normal for children to think intelligently or be serious about life. Ms. Klein also assigns some rigid role expectations with regard to age: Grandma is too old to have a boyfriend, and Bern apologizes for missing her mother by saying, "I guess I'm too old to be like that."

These criticisms notwithstanding, *What It's All About* has some very humanistic facets. As a story about divorce, it is commendable. Regarding Asian Americans, it is racist. [Elizabeth Young]

Ludell

by Brenda Wilkinson.
Harper & Row, 1975, $5.95,
170 pages, grades 5-12

In this sensitive and powerful novel, the positive and the negative sides of growing up in a rural southern Black community are revealed through the eyes of fifth-grader Ludell.

The place is Waycross, Georgia, in the 1950's where Ludell Wilson lives with her grandmother ("Mama"). Next door is the Johnson crew: Mrs. Johnson, sixteen year-old Mattie and her child, Ruthie Mae (Ludell's best friend), Willie, Hawk and Cathy.

The members of the two families care deeply about one another: When Ruthie Mae has no money for cookies or lunch, Ludell shares whatever she has with her. Ruthie Mae returns such favors by treating Ludell to "goodies" she charges (without permission) to her mother's food bill. When Ludell's grandmother uses tax rebate money to buy a refrigerator and TV, she tells Mrs. Johnson that the appliances belong to both families and should be used and enjoyed by all.

Ludell's keen perceptions expose the harsh underside of life in Waycross—the poverty, the selfishness and unconcern of her teachers in the segregated school she attends, the constant reminders that both Mama and Mrs. Johnson work as maids in white people's homes. Whenever racism and oppression are manifest, it is commented upon and clearly defined.

Each experience, whether humorous or tragic, contributes to Ludell's growing awareness of herself and of others. The reader can sense that one day her aspirations will lead her to seek a life outside of Waycross. For example, she begins to realize what roads she does not wish to take—Mattie's for one.

Burdened at sixteen with a baby, Mattie exists on a diet of *True Confession* magazines, chocolate cake and hopelessness. Then there's Dessa,

Ludell's mother, who left Waycross to work as a "live-in" maid up north, and in doing so, lost the opportunity to know her daughter.

As Ludell approaches womanhood, she enjoys both the secret of being Willie's girl friend and the challenge of developing her new-found skill as a writer. She, too, will leave Waycross one day, but unlike her mother, she will be able to exercise more control over her destiny.

Author Wilkinson effectively captures the subtle nuances of Black Southern dialect and draws readers inside the Black experience. In addition, her heroine provides a truly positive role model for young Black readers. Ludell has a keen sense of who she is, shares with those less fortunate than herself and is shown overcoming adversities in her life. [Patricia Ann Spence]

Let Me Be A Free Man: A Documentary of Indian Resistance

compiled and edited by Jane B. Katz.
Lerner, 1975, $6.95,
183 pages, grades 6-up

Let Me Be A Free Man is an anthology of orations by Indian patriots, including Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph, Geronimo, Vine Deloria and Dennis Banks. Realistically illustrated with photographs of the patriots, it is a perceptive and incisive history of Native American resistance, amazing in its scope and informative in its well-chosen quotations and examples. The essence of Native American life is fully conveyed in the words of these leaders, and the book is illuminating without being pedantic.

This book would be excellent as supplementary background information for older readers or as an introduction to the history that is omitted in the school books of younger readers. Given the white viewpoint which dominates most historical accounts, the book may disconcert the uninformed.

Ms. Katz's narrative is a fine complement to the eloquent and stirring words of the warriors and chiefs represented. Her transitions display a competent familiarity with the subject and are executed with rare smoothness. Her observations in the book's final pages are astute and demonstrate keen insight into contemporary Native American political movements and current leadership. [Diane Burns]

What Can She Be? A Police Officer

by Gloria and Esther Goldreich,
photographs by Robert Ipcar.
Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1975, $4.75,
48 pages, grades 4-6

This factual story, about two sisters who work as New York City police officers on a neighborhood beat and Emergency Rescue Squad, is a volume in the *What Can She Be* series on women's careers. "Laura and Nancy Ames love police work," states the text. "They think being police officers is the very best kind of work for them to do." How one feels about this book depends on one's feelings about the role of police in our society. In this reviewer's opinion, the book represents role reversal, "piece of the pie" attitudes at their worst.

The feminist struggle cannot be successfully waged by those who would have women take any job just because men do it. Surely, police officers perform nice, innocuous tasks like those of the women in this book—they aid sick people, help children cross streets, assist people who are locked out of their homes, etc. But being a police person also involves upholding the "law" in this unjust society. Why are not Laura and Nancy shown beating up the Black and Spanish people of Harlem, arresting prostitutes or smashing the heads of student protestors at Columbia? Feminists must demand equal rights within a radically changed, egalitarian society, not merely the "equal" right to become guardians of oppression.

But questionable politics is not this book's only drawback. Although their book is filled with information, the authors have failed to exploit their subject matter's potential for "excitement." The police profession is depicted in a dull fashion, and the photography is dismal—reminiscent of the ugliness of most city police precincts. The cast of characters, both citizens and cops, is almost entirely white—a highly distorted portrayal of New York City.

On the positive side, the two women are presented as competent, active, "equal" members of the police team, and one sister is repeatedly shown carrying heavy loads and working with heavy equipment. [Sue Ribner]

What Jazz Is All About

by Lillian Erlich.
Messner, 1975, $6.64,
213 pages, grades 7-up

What Jazz Is All About should really be called "The History of Black Music" as this is more an in-depth examination of Black music in general than a book on jazz in particular.

In tracing the roots of jazz, the author goes back to the early African rhythms of the slaves, compares the African musical heritage to that of Western music, and then discusses the evolution of Black music in this country. Six chapters later, she discusses jazz specifically from the 1920's to the present.

In the course of describing the emergence and evolution of various forms of Black music, the author supplies a great deal of information, including biographical portraits of renowned Black musicians.

For the most part, this is a highly informative and useful book. How-

The illustrations in *Amy and the Cloud Basket* are remarkable in depicting Blacks and whites as integrated equals.

ever, the author's non-Black ethnocentrism surfaces occasionally. Discussing Black music during slavery, she makes the insensitive statement, "But the truth may be that the institution of slavery, cruel as it was, helped rather than hindered the development of this music and gave it emotional depth." Comparing Black music and values to European forms, she defines the former negatively before elaborating on what the music or people are about. For example, she states early in the book, "West Africans had no written language, so they used songs. . . ." Although the importance of music in African life is subsequently explained, the reader has first been presented with a negative value judgment. She might have written, "West Africans had an oral, rather than written, language tradition, of which songs were an essential part."

While these negative elements are infrequent, they can annoy and frustrate a Black reader and are unfortunate in what is otherwise a well-researched and thorough presentation of Black musical history. [Patricia Ann Spence]

Amy and the Cloud Basket

by Ellen Pratt.
Lollipop Power, 1975, $2.00 (paper), 38 pages, grades k-3

Enter, a pleasant fantasy tale set in the village of Pan: "High on a slope of a mountainous land/Soar the high spires of the village of Pan./The buildings are towers. Each house is a steeple./Such dwellings are perfect for those climbing people."

Each morning, all of Pan's inhabitants older than ten climb up to cover the moon and uncover the sun. Each evening, they climb again to reverse the process. Those under ten are in school, learning how to perform their future tasks.

Pan is an almost-perfect paradise. But since the book was published by a feminist publishing collective, life in Pan is predictably flawed: The roles of these happy people are strictly segregated by sex (although they are integrated as to race and age, and heroine Amy is Black). On Amy's tenth birthday, she announces her wish to have what the males have—a basket instead of a spoon, which is the female lot in Pan. Everyone is aghast but Amy is adamant, and since the sun must be uncovered quickly they give in. Thereafter, Pan is not merely idyllic but supremely perfect.

A sweet book, but overly simple. Even young children are capable of understanding a little more about 1) the struggle which inevitably accompanies change, and 2) the hurt caused by oppression—whether that oppression is sexism or racism. A second flaw is the picturing of Pan's "before" and "after" as almost equally idyllic, which weakens the intended message. That is unfortunate, since here is an interesting attempt to combine fantasy with a real issue—social justice.

The illustrations are remarkable in their depiction of Black and white adults and children as truly integrated equals. Black figures are often in the foreground and seem to have leadership positions. The usual one-Black-face-in-the-crowd acknowledgment of multiculturalism, common to the art work in most children's books, is absent in *Amy and the Cloud Basket*. [Lyla Hoffman]

New York City Too Far From Tampa Blues

by T. Ernesto Bethancourt.
Holiday House, 1975, $6.95,
190 pages, grades 7-up

Horatio Alger is alive and well and living in Tampa, Florida. Twelve-year-old, guitar-playing Tom lives in poverty in Tampa, Florida, with his "Spanish" father, Pancho, his Anglo mother and his three sisters. "Macho" Pancho rules his brood with an iron hand and profane mouth. But notwithstanding his authoritarianism and penchant for taking the strap to his children, everyone loves Pancho. When Pancho decides (unilaterally, of course) to move the family to Brooklyn, where his relatives have found him a truck-driving job, Tom's adventures begin.

Tough youth gangs, nasty cops and sundry other slum-look "staples" parade through the pages. Tom survives all of the action, combining his wits and musical talents with those of an Italian shoe-shine boy to earn some money. First, the boys sing in an Irish bar (getting over with "Danny Boy"). Later, they cut a professional album called "New York City Too Far From Tampa Blues." The undisputed stars of their public school graduation, the boys move onward and upward to the prestigious High School of Music and Art. The future looks rosy at the book's end.

Although Tom's father and numerous relatives were born and raised in Puerto Rico, they never refer to themselves as anything but "Spanish." One can only conclude that the author, described on the book jacket as the son of an Hispanic father, must have identity problems. His general mind-set is exemplified by the following:

"My Dad was an ice man when we lived in Tampa. It's a great job. You get to carry an ice pick in a holster on your belt, like Matt Dillon."

"And it don't matter what Mom thinks, because she goes along with Dad, no matter what he says."

"Well, that where Pancho is very Spanish, Tom. He feels that he's the big dog over in your yard. And when he barks, you jump. He don't figure he has to explain nothin to his own kids."

"Driving with Pancho is a lot of fun. It's like you at war with everybody else on the road."

"I never knew what Uncle Jack thought was so funny when he said Spanish people wear pointy shoes for killing cockroaches in corners. It's true. . . ."

Pancho dearly loves his only son, holds two jobs, and works very hard. He is also very proud—which means that when he goes on strike, the author describes the strike in two paragraphs and devotes pages to Pancho's resistance to welfare and food stamps.

Stereotypes abound. The three sisters, like Mom, have no personality, cry a lot and seem inept. A virago of a grandmother and an Irish prostitute have hearts of gold. So does a little Italian mother who says, "Girls are a pleasure, next to boys. I always wanted a girl. Instead, I ended up with this bunch of Indians and troublemakers." The author also stereotypes Jews with regard to money and the Irish vis-à-vis liquor, so Native Americans, women and "Spanish" people should not feel they have been discriminated against.

Escapism is evident, as well. Although Tom shares the money he earns from singing with his family, his musical flight from poverty is the stuff of which dreams are made for Third World boys and girls in our urban ghettos and *barrios*. The story does have humor, and some cultural validity, but overall, it is a negative experience which fails to provide role models and reinforces the worst kinds of stereotypes. [Carmen D. Figueroa]

Kate Ryder

by Hester Burton, illustrated
by Victor G. Ambrus.
T.Y. Crowell,
1975, $6.95,
178 pages, grades 7-up

It is 1646, and twelve-year-old Kate Ryder and her family are embroiled in the miseries of the English Civil War. Mr. Ryder has been away four years fighting for Parliament's cause against King Charles' Royalists. Just when the war seems to be ending, he contracts camp fever and his wife goes to care for him. It is left to Kate, her older brother and sister to run the farm. Kate is thrilled to shear sheep, usually men's work, and she loves to read and dream of going off to sea as her other, adored brother has done.

Months later, Kate's mother and father return. Her older brother admits he is a Royalist and runs off to marry Kate's friend, Tamsin. The war starts up again with father and son fighting on opposing sides. At Colchester, where she has gone to stay with her brother's wife and son, Kate witnesses the cruelties of war during the town's siege and learns of her brother's death. In time, her father comes for her and her dead brother's family and takes them back home.

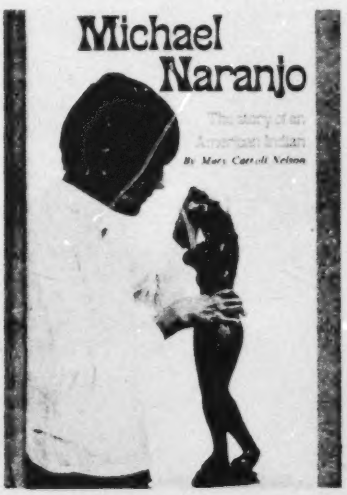
Alas, for all of her early promise, Kate fails to emerge as a courageous female heroine. Sexism triumphs instead. When her brother returns from sea and comments on what pretty marriage bait she has become, Kate (now sixteen) seems to forget her previously expressed, anti-marriage views. Her mother adds more fuel to the matrimonial fire when she compliments Kate on the quality of her yarn. The "pretty enough to marry" ethic and the materialistic preparation of a dowry are emphasized throughout the novel.

It seems anti-sexist to see a father of the 1600's portrayed as extremely supportive, who calls his daughter "the scholar," encourages her reading and accepts without laughing her dreams of going off to sea. But sexism rides again in the characterization of Mrs. Ryder. She is totally mean and insensitive, especially compared to her perfect husband. As for Kate's sister Miriam, she only becomes nice after she is softened by falling in love. It is unfortunate too that the political views of the female characters are never presented. They just follow automatically their husband's or father's views.

Positive features of the story are its lack of ageism, conformism or individ-

ualism. Elderly characters are shown leading active, concerned lives, everyone fights for the cause they believe in and divided loyalties and commitments are accepted within the famiiy.

But what happens to the sheep-shearing, sea-loving, scholarly Kate? One wonders whether the twelve-and-over set, for whom the book was apparently written, would relate to a main character who is more often an observer than an active participant in events. One is disappointed as the book ends with Kate happy to be home doing humdrum tasks, and desiring a husband just like her father—"one who lives not more than a day's ride away." Kate is thankful and says she could not ask for more, but the reader is still waiting for Kate's story to begin. [Carol Snyder]



Michael Naranjo: The Story of an American Indian

by Mary Carroll Nelson.
Dillon Press, 1975, $4.95,
66 pages, grades 6-up

Michael Naranjo is a Native American from Santa Clara and Taos Pueblos, New Mexico. In 1967, he was drafted into the army and sent to Viet Nam, where he was permanently blinded. While in the hospital, Michael began to work with clay and, in time, became a talented and famous sculptor working in brass.

Michael Naranjo's story is engrossing and inspiring. Although it is sketchy at times, this book effectively depicts his feelings about a carefree childhood, restless adolescence, army experiences and maturation as a blind artist. It is a vivid account, not only of a young man's journey through life, but also of his culture and adjustment to different life situations—Indian and non-Indian, sighted and blind independent and dependent.

The author, a white Eastern-educated woman, is ethnocentric at times. She mentions the 1680 Pueblo revolt, which drove the Spanish back to Mexico for 13 years, but does not mention Pope, leader of the Santa Clara Pueblo. Nor does she explore the reasons why going home for the weekend was frowned upon by authorities at a Bureau of Indian Affairs school. Michael mentions a Sergeant Yazzie whom he had known in the army. Yazzie is a Navajo name, yet the author does not say anything about him or his squad.

Overall, however, this book is honest and compassionate, without being pitying or condescending. [Diane M. Burns]

My Brother Fine With Me

by Lucille Clifton, illustrated
by Moneta Barnett.
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975,
$5.50, unpaged, grades k-3

Johnetta's misfortune can be summed up in one word: Baggy. Before her brother Baggy was born, life was fine. Wouldn't it be great if he weren't around? When Baggy decides to run away, Johnetta is delighted and encourages him to pack before their parents come home from work. After Baggy leaves, a disconcerting quiet permeates the house, and Johnetta feels his absence acutely. However, Baggy soon returns, at which time the children discover their mutual love and need for one another.

On the surface, *My Brother Fine With Me* is a typical sibling rivalry story with a happy ending. But as one pieces together the visual and written messages, some disturbing elements emerge.

First of all, Johnetta is depicted as a miniature housewife. A broom and dustpan appear in three of the pictures, the door keys dangle conspicuously from Johnetta's neck in almost every picture, and before Baggy departs she says, "Somebody have to stay here, see after the house while mama and daddy at work." Throughout the summer, Johnetta is responsible for taking care of herself and Baggy during the day. While this is an accurate representation of the role of an older child in a family of working parents, sexist roles are being reinforced—particularly when the characterizations of Johnetta and Baggy are compared. Baggy sees himself as a Black warrior. Rationalizing his fear of running away, he says, "Seem to me, a warrior better stay at home and take care of his family." Johnetta is pleased with this statement. Once more children will conclude that the male is the protector and the female the one to be protected.

Also disturbing is the lack of family unity (the mother seems insensitive and the father only gives orders), as well as Johnetta's competitive spirit and preoccupation with her own needs. Johnetta's desire for Baggy to leave is a selfish one, and her subsequent acceptance of him stems mainly from her inability to cope with loneliness.

The beauty of the book lies in Clifton's keen sense of reality and her talent for capturing the flavor of children's speech. [Emily R. Moore]

Saddles and Sabers: Black Men in the Old West

by LaVere Anderson, illustrated by
Herman Vestal.
Garrard, 1975, $3.78,
128 pages, grades 5-10

These short biographies chronicle the lives of a few Black cowboys and soldiers who helped to "settle" the West during 1850 to 1900. Some went West to escape from slavery; others were seeking freedom from the prejudice that pervaded their existence in the South or East. They were generally welcomed if they possessed outstanding physical strength or cowboy skills. And they were especially wel-

comed if they would participate in fighting or tracking Native Americans.

As indicated by the title of the book, women are virtually absent. The existence of a second sex is acknowledged only in a few sentences such as "The women cooked while the men played cards and talked" or "Isaiah married a Sioux girl." Although describing a sexist culture which glorified male strength and camaraderie and assigned females to sexual or cooking functions, the author could have tried to avoid reinforcing sexism. No such attempt was made.

An attempt was made, however, to include Native American viewpoints in discussing the many battles they fought to defend their homelands. But a mixed message is delivered to readers because many of the Black men are praised for killing Native Americans. Similarly, the author notes, on the one hand, white racism and white broken promises to Native Americans and Blacks but, on the other, supports Blacks and whites against Native Americans!

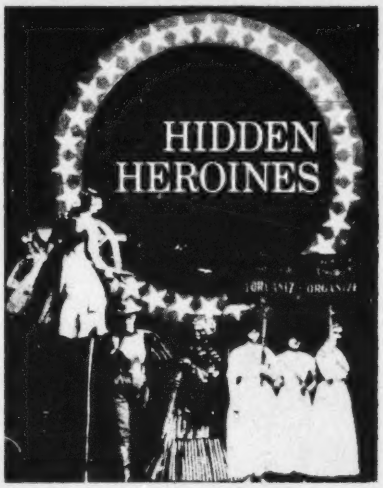
Certainly it is important for young people to know that the "Wild West" was composed of others besides Reds and whites, but it is equally important that books present a historical perspective which will contribute to the liberation of all people. [Betty Nyangoni]

Hidden Heroines

by Elaine Landau.
Messner, 1975, $6.64,
91 pages, grades 4-7

Hidden Heroines is well-intended and contains portraits of some very interesting women. It is filled with wonderful historical prints and photographs of women in a variety of roles which, alone, are valuable. This illustrative material, which depicts not only single individuals but groups and movements, indicates that a good deal of research and thought were invested in the book.

Unfortunately, the book founders badly, as others have done, on the author's penchant for confusing courage with endurance, and on her



inability to present information within the context of a sound historical perspective. For example, Elizabeth Grant of Jamestown is not really a heroine except in the sense of her "heroic" ability to suffer. While pregnant, she sees her husband die of malaria, tries to sell a cherished gold music box for food, and finally dies in the snow of starvation. The book does not point out that the plight of Jamestown settlers was a direct result of their own greed and racism. Generous Native Americans had offered food and friendship. But repelled by the wholesale pillage of their homes and land, they stopped teaching the colonists how to hunt, grow food and live in the strange climate. Is the story of Elizabeth Grant's hardship complete without reference to the settlers' harshness towards the Indians?

Throughout the book, Landau equates individual ordeals with the indomitable spirit of common people *en masse* to endure and survive. But if we fail to teach children the difference between one individual and the people as a whole, how will they understand what gives continuity to history, what enables people *en masse* to produce the heroes and heroines who are needed to meet history's challenges?

Judging from the excellent illustrations, there were feminist "firsts" all over the place in early America. The pioneer women wore neither pretty curls nor crinolines. They were hard-working people with ravaged faces—miners, doctors, soldiers, abolitionists, telegraphers, astronomers.

However, elitist romanticism colors the author's selections (even the accomplishments of interesting women whom the author profiles are those of ersatz self-fulfillers rather than of heroic figures). Describing some of the "heroines," she writes:

> But some led more pleasurable lives (than the hard-working colonists). They ran large plantations . . . planned the menus, oversaw the table, made sure of fresh towels for guests. . . . Running a plantation was like running a big business.

The author is strangely silent here about the lives of those "unremarkable" women—slaves and indentured servants—who kneaded the flour, cured the meat, milked the cows, planted and plowed. These abused and historically neglected people, who were the backbone of the colonial existence, are not presented as heroines.

Native Americans are appreciated primarily for what they taught Europeans and how they helped them. Their cultures and civilizations are not discussed in their own right, and the description of the daily life of the women is incomplete.

As for Black women, they are crowded into one inevitable Civil War chapter. Landau's accounts of the Black women who were guides, blew up bridges, helped prisoners escape, served in the Union army, etc., hint that these heroines were perhaps the most "hidden" of all. Even Harriet Tubman, noted for her work with the Underground Railway, is not well-known as a commanding officer in the Union army, the first woman in American military history to lead a battlefield attack. She organized Black troops for raids on the Confederate forces and arsenals and set 500 prisoners of war free. Significantly, *not one of her soldiers was killed or wounded* in her engagements; yet 25 years after the war she was given only a small pension—and that as the *widow* of a soldier! Her face tells the story—this is one book in which a picture is really worth a thousand words. [Vickie Lawrence]

In the BOOKSHELF, a regular *Bulletin* column, all books that relate to minority themes are evaluated by members of the minority group depicted.—Editors.

Pat Cummings has studied at Pratt, Atlanta School of Art and Spellman College. A free-lance artist, she has done illustrations and design for magazines, children's theater groups and others. Ms. Cummings can be reached at 54 W. 82nd St., New York, N.Y. 10024; tel.: (212) 580-7239.

Benjamin Jones has studied at Pratt, the School of Visual Arts and other institutions. His work has appeared in many exhibitions and magazines (including *Art Forum, Ebony* and *Newsweek*) and illustrated two books (*Contemporary Black Artists* and *New Black Perspectives*). He is now art instructor at Jersey City State College. Mr. Jones can be reached at 15 Goldsmith Ave., Newark, N.J. 07112; tel.: (201) 926-1091.

Ben Bey is studying at the School of Visual Arts. His work has appeared in several exhibitions, including the Greenwich Village Art Fair. Mr. Bey can be reached at 537 W. 125th St., New York, N.Y. 10027; tel.: (212) 864-0706.

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